



Virginia Commission on Youth

December 19, 2011

1:00 p.m.

House Room C

MINUTES

Attending:

Senators Harry Blevins, Edward Houck, and Yvonne Miller;
Delegates Mamyé BaCote, Robert Brink, Mark Cole, and Christopher Peace;
Citizen Members Gary Close and Joy Myers (electronically)

Not Attending:

Delegates Beverly Sherwood and Anne Crockett-Stark; Citizen member Anthony Dale

Staff Attending:

Amy M. Atkinson, Leah Hamaker, Joyce Garner

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Senator Yvonne B. Miller

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:00 and invited Commission members and staff to introduce themselves. She welcomed all members of the public to the Commission's fourth meeting in the 2011 study year.

II. Election of Officers

In accordance with provisions in the Code of Virginia, the Chair initiated the annual election of the Commission on Youth Chair and Vice Chair. In response to a call for nominations for Chair, Gary Close nominated Delegate Peace, seconded by Delegate Brink. There being no other nominations or discussion, the Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion. Senator Miller passed the gavel to Delegate Peace, as new Chair.

Senator Miller nominated Senator Blevins as Vice Chair. That vote was also unanimous.

Delegate Peace and Senator Blevins expressed their appreciation to fellow members for their votes of confidence and commended Senator Miller for her tireless advocacy of youth and families and service as Chair.

III. 2011 Legislative Study Recommendations

Study of School Enrollment Practices for Virginia's Kinship Caregivers

Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director

In response to the Commission request at its November 9 meeting, Ms. Atkinson presented information on staff's work with stakeholders to continue exploring viable options since that meeting. Ms. Atkinson's PowerPoint presentation outlined the three recommendations offered for the Commission's consideration.

Delegate Cole asked for further clarification about how child custody applied as an option for kinship caregivers.

In response to the recommendations outlined, Delegate Peace noted that he has spoken to his superintendent about the pros and cons of the provisions for school enrollment and would propose modifying Recommendation 3 to have the local divisions work with caregivers, with the goal of addressing the issue.

Delegate Brink complimented the Advisory Group and Commission staff on their consideration of the issues. He outlined the competing interests the enrollment issue brings into play. Arlington has the highest per pupil expenditure in the state, making their schools desirable to families.

Mr. Close commented that having the criminal sanction for providing false information be a Class 5 felony was an important deterrent. Delegate Peace stated that this was added to address concerns about “school shopping.”

In response to Senator Blevins’ concern about families seeking to place students in schools for the purpose of having them participate in highly successful sports programs, Ms. Atkinson clarified that Commission staff had investigated and found that only a formal custody order would make this possible. (The informal arrangement would not.)

As noted on the agenda, public comment followed presentation of the study recommendations.

After hearing public comment, Commission members discussed the issues further.

Senator Houck asked about the provisions of Power of Attorney. Two of the speakers gave conflicting answers to Commission members’ questions about the authority a Power of Attorney provides to school divisions.

Referencing Recommendation 3, Senator Blevins asked for clarification on the composition of the State Executive Council. He then moved to have the Commission adopt this recommendation. Motion seconded, without discussion.

Six members voted six for adoption of Recommendation 3, two voted against. The motion passed.

Request the State Executive Council to review the work of the Commission on Youth and develop a plan to ensure school stability for children in out-of-home care, including children in kinship care arrangements, both formal and informal.

The Chair will make the request of the State Executive Council by letter.

Other Business

The Chair asked to interrupt the agenda to recognize Senator Houck for his service to the Commission on Youth since it was mandated in 1991. As the Commission’s longest-serving member, Senator Houck leaves the General Assembly having dedicated 20 years to issues related to youth and their families. Senator Houck received a standing ovation from members of the Commission and the public.

IV. Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia and Leading Industrialized Nations

Patricia A. Popp, Ph.D., State Coordinator, Project HOPE-VA

Clinical Associate Professor, School of Education, College of William & Mary

Dr. Popp outlined in a PowerPoint presentation the issues surrounding comparison and the methodology she and her team of graduate students will use in researching the identified study issues.

Commission on Youth members asked questions of Dr. Popp, including whether the fact that the nations targeted for further study had homogenous populations would affect the validity of comparison. Members discussed trends to de-emphasize liberal arts education in schools and what effect, if any, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) might have on students' critical thinking skills.

Mr. Close asked whether William & Mary will look at state funding and asked whether it follows students. He asked about school choice in Finland and asked that the Netherlands be included in the list of countries selected for comparison.

Senator Blevins asked whether schools in the nations William & Mary researched used the academic tracking process and have any kind of 8th grade-type cut.

Delegate Cole asked about the correlation between family life and school achievement. William & Mary will present some numbers to address that issue.

V. Item 304.M – Final Report: A Plan for Community-based Children's Behavioral Health Services in Virginia

John Pezzoli, Assistant Commissioner for Behavioral Services

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

Mr. Pezzoli reported by PowerPoint presentation on the Department's progress in meeting its goals for developing the Commonwealth's first comprehensive plan for children's behavioral health services. Directed by the 2010 General Assembly to develop a plan to more nearly insure the provision of both inpatient and community-based services as close to children's homes as possible, the Department submitted its final report to the General Assembly on November 1, 2011.

The report includes five recommendations which the 2012 General Assembly may consider. The Department's priority recommendation is to expand the array and capacity of services to assure a consistent base level of services statewide. Service categories include crisis response services, case management and intensive care coordination, psychiatric services, and in-home services.

Commission members asked whether the recommendations were included in the Governor's proposed 2012 budget. Mr. Pezzoli indicated that he was not certain about the current status of the recommendations.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.